KEY-WORDS IN THE LANGUAGE OF AGNES MIEGEL

BY
MARGARET WOODBRIDGE
B.A., Smith College, 1933
M.A., Cornell University, 1938

THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
GERMAN IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1942

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Introduction

The purpose of the pages which follow is to examine the individuality of the genius of the poet-author Agnes Miegel, as that reveals itself in her instinctive emotional attitudes toward the world in which she lives. This revelation lies in the unique meanings that Agnes Miegel attaches to certain common words which are not generally marked by any distinction in the usual connotation or customary use. These words, connotating more than the commonly accepted definitions imply, are considered keys to an understanding of the essentially personal elements of the author in question—elements which distinguish her from other writers who have perhaps experienced a similar environment and enjoyed a similar inheritance. For it is not the influences of external surroundings and inheritance which form an individual, which set one person apart from all others and make him an entity and a unique being. The individuality of any person depends rather upon the manner in which he responds to the stimulation of external forces and that response he embodies in his attitudes toward life, in the ethical and moral values which he recognizes and in the ideals which he cherishes. In the realm of creative art, whether literary or otherwise, an artistic genius will express his attitudes, his ethical and moral values and his ideals in his approach and reaction to life and in his interpretation of the events which he experiences either actually or vicariously. Specifically, in the literary world, a writer will leave the mark of his individual genius not primarily in the subjects which he treats, nor yet in the actual technique which he employs, for the unique quality that makes him a person apart from others lies not so much in the things which interest him as in his mental and emotional approach to those things and in his interpretation and evaluation of them.

Whether or not the interpretation and evaluation of facts

and events be deliberately expressed in an author's works, they are there none the less, in the social, moral and ethical codes which the works reveal. The words by means of which the author presents his social, moral and ethical ideas are the result, conceivably, of conscious deliberation, but the actual choice of a specific word to convey a concept peculiar to that author is unconscious on his part, as Julius Petersen points out (*Die Wissenschaft von der Dichtung I*). When a word is consistently chosen to convey the same idea drawn from an author's own personal reaction to life, that word becomes important in so far as it illustrates the author's unique response to outside stimulation and in so far as it reveals some element of the author's *Weltanschauung* which is based upon his interpretation of life and his evaluation of the events which compose life. Such a word is a key-word, and an understanding of its exact meaning contributes to a comprehension of the individuality of the author in question. Julius Petersen calls such words *Lieblingswörter,* and he uses this as a technical, critical term and not in its usual and expected sense. The English language has as yet no good equivalent expression of Petersen's term *Lieblingswort,* since English and American critics have not practiced this approach to literature. The present author has coined the term key-word to express Petersen's concept.

As the preceding paragraphs imply, the key-words which a writer uses reveal his *Weltanschauung* and at the same time they reveal the unique element in that author's personality which sets him apart as an individual, for the nature of a *Weltanschauung* is dictated in large part by the individual beliefs and reactions of the person who composed it. In the long run it is not the factual content of a literary work which lives, inspires admiration and lends that work its artistic value in the eyes of mankind; it is the soul, the intangible element of individual personality with which an author endows his work that sets it apart and above the average in the critical judgment of contemporaries and future generations. That element in the works of Agnes Miegel is clearly expressed in the key-words which are to be discussed in the pages which follow.

The approach employed in this study is based upon that

used by Ewald Boucke in his *Wort und Bedeutung in Goethes Sprache* (1901). In this book Boucke shows that the connotation of the word *tüchtig* as understood and used by Goethe is fundamental in his *Weltanschauung* and that the idea which it expresses is the basis for his life work. Goethe's understanding of the word is not the common one, for he recognized it as implying free and untrammeled activity which is productive of good. This is not the only concept worthy of mention in the *Weltanschauung* of Goethe, but it is that upon which all other elements rest and is therefore the most expressive of the essential individuality which distinguishes Germany's greatest literary figure.

The value of this type of study is well illustrated by recent theses done at the University of Illinois. Uland Fehlau (*Adalbert Stifter's 'Weltanschauung' as Reflected in his Language,* 1937) found that Stifter uses the word *schön* to convey the concept fundamental to his *Weltanschauung* and that the meaning attached to that adjective is broader than the commonly accepted definition. In a similar study of Raabe (*Studies in Raabe's Language,* 1940) Elisabeth Hartsook found the essential element of that poet's attitude toward life expressed by *still* and *ruhig.* The most striking study is that of Willard E. Skidmore (*Eichendorff's 'Weltanschauung' as Revealed in his Language,* 1942) in which there is presented an estimation of Eichendorff entirely opposed to previous, accepted evaluations. This new picture is based upon a careful analysis of the key-words in which the poet expresses the fundamental attitudes and beliefs by which he directed and governed his life. Because Skidmore's conclusions are based upon beliefs and ideas which Eichendorff himself expressed, they must be more nearly true than arguments based upon what others have said and written of the man—arguments which ignore the existence of a positive and dominant Christian faith that gave the poet his actively optimistic view of life.

In this essay the present writer has followed the technique employed by those persons mentioned above and has essayed to go beyond any of the previous studies of Agnes Miegel. The best of these is the work of Maxmilian Schochow (*Agnes Mie-*

gel. Eine Studie, 1929) which does not include consideration of the more recent works. Schochow's critical estimation of the poetess is excellent as far as it goes, but he does not recognize certain elements of the *Weltanschauung* which very largely explain the nature of the work of Agnes Miegel. Unlike Schochow's book, that of Karl Plenzat (*Agnes Miegel. Werden und Werk,* 1938) is almost a complete disappointment. Because of his personal acquaintance with Frau Miegel, Plenzat has been able to contribute many interesting facts concerning her life and his book includes competent summaries of her writings. His critical attempts are worthless because of the intellectual misconception under which he labors. In his effort to explain the poetess and her attitudes toward the world, he totally misses those important phases of her *Weltanschauung* which are not obviously related to the modern German emphasis upon "Blut und Boden" and the more blatant aspects of Naziism.

In addition to these two books, many articles have appeared which discuss Agnes Miegel's contributions in the various fields of literature. Since most of these are studies of the ballads or isolated works and are concerned more closely with her external style of writing than with her *Weltanschauung* and the manner in which that is expressed, they will not be discussed here.

Because Agnes Miegel is in no sense a philosopher and therefore has made no attempt to compose her *Weltanschauung* logically, it has seemed advisable to alter the main outlines of Boucke's approach. He discussed Goethe's key-words under the headings ethical, religious and social. Agnes Miegel's key-words fall most easily into a social and an ethical group. The former is placed first because it is more fundamental and the discussion of the ethical terms can thus be based upon it. The last chapter of the essay is concerned with certain words which the poetess uses as symbols for the concepts composing her social and ethical attitudes. There is, of course, no distinct line which can be drawn between key-word and symbol, for all key-words are symbols in a sense. Those words discussed as symbols have attained their specific meanings because they are related to the concepts for which they stand by their very

nature. They have been discussed at the end of the study because they offer good illustrative material of the *Weltanschauung* presented in the first two chapters.

SOCIAL CONCEPTS

Whenever certain of the beliefs and precepts of a person are considered under the heading "social", the word is employed in a special sense. It usually pertains to human relationships in general and specifically to society as an organism or a group of inter-related, inter-dependent persons. In this chapter it is used with a rather broad meaning for it serves to encompass the various trends in Frau Miegel's attitude toward existence on this earth. Her social concepts arise out of her effort to find a *raison d'être*, and to understand the relationships which exist between herself and the world—the latter being composed of the living, those who have already passed into the realm of the dead and those who are yet to be born. In addition there is the personification of East Prussia. The key-words which express these relationships and at the same time explain the nature of her social attitude are *Mutter, Kind* and *grün*.

The concept behind *Mutter* is based largely upon what Frau Miegel remembers of her own mother, and this picture has been generalized until it represents all mothers. The actual outward appearance was suggested by a woman whom Frau Miegel saw in South Germany and whom she describes in the essay dedicated to her mother (in *Die Mutter*). The typical mother is blond and young, she has deep blue eyes and she is very friendly. When Agnes Miegel saw her, she knew suddenly how her own mother had looked and knew, too, that she would find this same face, this same personality "in dem Lächeln jeder Mutter und in der klaren Bläue der allgegenwärtigen, die meinem [Agnes Miegel's] suchenden Blick Antwort gibt". This woman held a child in her arms, and the presence of the child is important, for upon the child-mother relationship much of the social attitude depends. A child's happiness is dependent upon the feeling of security, safety and permanency which the mother's presence and personality inspire. Because

the mother cares for the child, feeds it, stills its sorrow and pain, Frau Miegel regards her as the source of the happiness which is characteristic of childhood. Her own mother filled this role and as the poetess matured she came to look upon the personification of East Prussia as endowed with the same traits and personality.

That Frau Miegel felt the spirit of her homeland to be similar to the ideal human mother is shown by the lyrics. In the lyric "Ich" from the volume *Heimat*, the poetess says that in her verse she has sung of her homeland, of its gods, its cities and its motherly heart. Many of the poems from this and other volumes address the land as *Mutter*, in others the idea is implicitly implied. "Cranz" (*Heimat*) for instance, does not call the land *Mutter*, but that idea is suggested by the words used to describe the land and the poetess' relationship to it. The poem reads in part:

> Ich aber lag geborgen an dem Hang
> Der weissen Düne. In den Sand gekrallt
> So wie ein Kätzchen in warmen Schoss.
> Und wohlig blinzelnd und gedankenlos
> Spürt ich, sie wacht: heilig, vertraut, uralt.

In the essay "Meine alte Lina" (*Mensch unbekannt*) the poetess recalls lying in the arms of her wet-nurse (her mother was ill for some years after Agnes' birth) and Frau Miegel uses the word *geborgen* to describe the sensation she remembers having. This word appears when she describes any child in its mother's or nurse's arms. Frequently she compares the position of the child to that of a kitten, as in "Cranz", or a dog. The well-being and utter comfort of the child is inspired by the quality which the adjective *vertraut* expresses. The idea that a mother is familiar and therefore trusted is common enough in all literatures. In Agnes Miegel's works it is a persistent idea and very important, for the happiness of a child is dependent upon the familiarity of surroundings. Furthermore, the voice of a mother or nurse which quiets the fear or grief of a child is always described as *vertraut*, as if that quality alone were principally responsible for restoring the child's happiness and content. In illustration of the extent to which Frau Miegel carries

this idea, her remarks about her years in Berlin may be cited. She says in the first essay of *Kinderland* that though she found many friends in the German capitol, she remained very unhappy because Berlin and its life remained so utterly strange to her and she never felt at home there. The homesickness for East Prussia finally caused her to return to her native city, where she found some measure of contentment, because she was among persons and things which were *vertraut.*

A child's happiness is, in Agnes Miegel's eyes, the epitome of all happiness. Whenever the word *Kind* or any of its compounds is used, this idea is implied. In the presentation of a tragic scene, Frau Miegel is apt to introduce a child, which, by contrast, heightens the sense of tragedy. In the poem which describes the French revolution, "Ça Ira" (*Balladen und Lieder*), a child is among those who die on the guillotine. In the story, "Die Fahrt der sieben Ordensbrüder" (*Geschichten aus Alt-Preussen*), the human sacrifices which accompany the death of Dorgo, the pagan lord, are made more moving and terrible by the fact that Dorgo's grandchildren are also killed. The tragedy of the children's death in both the verse and prose stories is intensified by the fact that they do not understand what is going on around them; they are bewildered and frightened to find themselves in strange situations. The happiness of a child is dependent upon the absence of the things which are strange to it and which, because of being strange, would disturb its inner tranquility. It is a child's very innocence and lack of experience which makes it naturally tranquil and therefore happy. Believing this, Frau Miegel can write in a lyric how a child picks the rose of passionate love, but does not know what it picks and is therefore unmoved by the emotion which the flower represents. In a similar manner, the hands of the lover who breaks the poetess' heart are decsribed as "grausam wie Kinderhände", for he does not know that he is breaking her heart.

The happiness characteristic of childhood is also found in mature persons and here it is also serenity undisturbed by exterior forces. Frau Miegel's parents and her aunts are all of them described in one place or another as *kindlich.* They all

possessed an inner tranquillity which the poetess so much desires for herself and they imparted this tranquillity to her childhood. For this reason Agnes Miegel longs for the return of her early youth, so that she may once more experience that utter peace which is happiness. The longing, or *Sehnsucht*, has another side to it, which is also connected with the *Mutter-Kind* relationsip. Frau Miegel ardently desired a child of her own. This desire expresses itself largely in the lyrics, in such poems as "Ungeborenes Leben", "Resi", "Gebet" (*Gedichte*) and others, all of which speak her intense desire for a child. The wish for a child is partly a natural one and also it is an expression of her belief that a family is an eternal chain which continues from one generation to another so that the traits and characteristics belonging to each family never die out. Because the poetess bore no children, she breaks the line, for she is the last of her family. This is the tragedy of her life, for she felt it to be a sacred duty to her ancestors to continue the family as they had done and to hand on to another generation the things she had had from her forebears, as she tells us in "Gespräch mit den Ahnen" in *Unter hellem Himmel*.

The close relationship with ancestors the poetess expresses in the lyric "Ihr" (*Gedichte*) in which she says that her being is composed of the same elements that composed her ancestors. In the essay "Gespräch mit den Ahnen", Frau Miegel carries the picture further and shows that not only is the nature of her being inherited, but also that her interests in life and her mental and intellectual heritage are from the same source. In order to have completed the cycle, she should have borne children and thus have insured the continuance of the family. Because she feels this to have been a sacred duty, her natural longing for a child of her own is increased to an extraordinary degree. This longing is expressed in the early poems by the word *Sehnsucht*, and in the later works it is implicit and part of the background against which her essays and stories unroll.

The parallel between a human mother and personified East Prussia has already been drawn. In those poems addressed directly to *Mutter Ostpreussen* she is described as be-

ing very like the ideal human mother in appearance and character. Frau Miegel regards herself as the child of her parents, and also as child of the land on which she lives. Just as a mother furthers the family line in that she bears children, so too *Mutter Ostpreussen,* the fertile land, is regarded as producing one race after another, supporting and nourishing her off-spring as a mother supports and nourishes her children. Like the linden tree which Agnes Miegel describes in *Unter hellem Himmel,* the land is "unveränderlich knopsend, blühend, immer sich erneuend, immer noch wachsend, . . . durch ihren Anblick tröstend wie eine Mutter, unerschöpflich quellend und vergehend wie ein Volk . . . " This quality of her homeland, the poetess embodies in the word *grün* and uses the adjective whenever she speaks of her homeland. In one of the stories from *Gang in die Dämmerung,* for instance, an old man who has been burnt out of house and home and blinded by Napoleon's soldiers, stands with his grand-daughter on a hill-side overlooking the valley which had been their home. The old man asks the little girl what land lies in front of them and what it looks like and she answers: "Es ist ganz grün, Väterchen, . . . und es heisst Heimat."

The parallelism between *Mutter* and *Mutter Ostpreussen* is illustrated by the fact that Frau Miegel often compares her own mother to the land. She says in the first essay in *Unter hellem Himmel* that though her parents are no longer living, she feels their presence, and of her mother she says: " . . . die Mutter warm und vertraut wie das grüne Land vor mir." A similar picture is to be found in *Katrinchen kommt nach Hause.* The heroine is visiting the home of her forefathers for the first time and she finds the country-side different from that to which she is accustomed. She notices that it is *grün* and as she looks at it, she fee's the same sensations which she had experienced when in her mother's arms.

ETHICAL CONCEPTS

The concepts which are to be treated here are abstract qualities which contribute to, or induce, an ideal life, or conversely, which destroy the possibility of such an existence.

The "ideal" life might be defined as one which is *kinderglücklich*, or naively and innocently happy. Such happiness is inspired by certain attributes of persons and the natural world, and it is dependent upon contentment and satisfaction of the desires of the individual. The qualities which induce "happiness" or content in a person are considered as ethical because they are conducive to the happy life, which is an "ideal" life. However, the concepts implied by the key-words to be discussed in the pages which follow do not define by what means the individual may win for himself an "ideal" existence; they do not describe a purposeful mode of behavior; they are not a means to an end, but are in themselves that end. For this reason the concepts are not ethical in the normal sense of that word. The term is used here to mean that which composes the good, the desirable in life, and it does not imply that those ideas discussed here designate a way of living. In this particular instance, the good or desirable in life is "happiness" or more exactly, inner tranquillity. The key-word which describes this tranquillity is *still*, or sometimes *friedlich*. The qualities upon which inner tranquillity depend are suggested by *hell*, *kühl* and *feierlich*.

The exact meaning of *still* is not so much peace as it is a state of release from the disturbances caused by external events and atmosphres. The upsetting influence is usually of an emotional nature and if inner tranquillity is disturbed, there is no "happiness" for the human being. In Berlin, for instance, Frau Miegel's tranquillity of inner being was destroyed by the homesickness which never left her until she finally returned to Königsberg. This idea is also very clearly illustrated in the lyric "Künstler" from the volume *Gedichte*. The poetess addresses those artists who have achieved fame and to whom the fruits of life are a satisfaction. She says to them: "Ihr wandert über mir in Licht und Stille." Because these people have found contentment with their fate, their existence can be described as *still*. By contrast to this is the fate of the poetess who does not experience the satisfaction the others know, even though she, too, has achieved fame and finds herself in what is for the other artists the garden of fulfillment. Her state of mind and

being is disturbed by what she calls "ein letztes Sehnen", a longing for something which life did not bring her. It will be remembered that the *Sehnsucht* mentioned previously had two sides to it: it was a longing for a child of her own, or for the tranquillity which she had known as a child. Either emotion might conceivably spoil a sense of content in the garden of fulfillment, just as homesickness destroyed her peace of mind during the years in Berlin. The nature of the longing is not as important as is the fact that any unfulfilled desire may upset the tranquillity which life normally brings. For *Stille*, in the first line of the poem, means tranquillity, the highest ethical concept, which is, as the concluding paragraphs will show, the foundation upon which Agnes Miegel's entire *Weltanschauung* is based.

The full importance of the concept implied by *still* becomes even clearer if it is realized that this is the chief attribute of the state of death. In the first place, Frau Miegel believes that the dead retain their personalities and their interests in the affairs of this world. She always describes the dead as either *still* or *friedlich*. At the same time she remarks upon the fact that the trials of life have left marks of weariness in the faces of the dead, which even the tranquillity which death brings cannot erase. The description of her deceased father is perhaps the most revealing of all those that the works offer, for it not only emphasizes the tranquillity which her father experienced, but also suggests the connection between this tranquillity and that common to a child. She writes in the little volume dedicated to him:

> Im Schlafverlangen übergrosser Müdigkeit ist das sanfte Greisengesicht zur Seite geneigt. Friedlich, wie die eines Kindes, liegen die schmalen Hände über dem schwarzsammten Gesangbuch gefaltet.

The "Müdigkeit" which the father's face expresses was etched by the cares and toil of life. The tranquillity which the folded hands reveal is the accompaniment of death. Because the hands are expressive of utter peace, they may be compared to those of a child, whose existence is characterized by happiness dependent upon tranquillity.

Because the quality suggested by *still* or *friedlich* is the highest to which one may attain in life and because it is also the chief characteristic of death, that state seems to be not an end to life, nor yet a separate existence; death is the culmination of life, with nothing tragic or fearful about it, for it brings the inner tranquillity which the poetess has not found in life and which she wants.

It has been said that inner tranquility depends upon the qualities suggested by *hell, kühl* and *feierlich*. The word *hell* does not mean simply bright, but it describes a state which is unclouded and undisturbed by emotional upset. It is characteristic of the expression of the eyes of a mother, as the description previously quoted shows. Those persons who live close to the land and who know its spirit are also possessed of this quality. The grandmother in *Audhumla* is such a person. Malone, in *Die schöne Malone,* possesses this trait to such a degree that she is able to inspire it in those whom she serves —people who might not otherwise have experienced any tranquillity. Children are also characterized by the inner clarity which *hell* implies and they inspire a reflection of it in those with whom they come into contact.

Kühl and *feierlich* are attributes of a mood or personality which is *hell*. The former is important in that it is the opposite of the heat which is an essential element in emotional stress destructive of tranquillity. The latter always suggests the presence of something of the divine spirit. Frau Miegel compared a linden tree to a church, to a mother and to a race of people in an essay in *Unter hellem Himmel*. Because the tree replaces each dead branch with a new shoot it is eternal like a race of people, because it has this power to reproduce it is like a mother, and by grace of this it bears relationship to a church, the symbol of divinity. The tree and the church are *feierlich*.

These key-words also appear in descriptions of natural settings which seem to reflect the mood of the poetess and to be in complete harmony with her own inner state. An atmosphere which expresses the opposite of *hell, kühl, still* is that which accords with the elements destructive of inner tranquillity or the reflection of it in nature. In the ballad "Hein-

rich von Plauen" (*Balladen und Lieder*) Frau Miegel describes the hero's sensations when in prison and when freed from prison. She embodies this description in key-words indicative of the "ideal" and of that which destroys the "ideal." The lines are particularly good illustrative material since they juxtapose the elements conducive to and destructive of happiness or tranquillity.

Heiss und schwül war es droben,
Hier im Hof ist es kühl and abendstill,
Aus den Ställen kommt der Kühe Gebrüll.
Wie Gold ist die Luft.
Purpurn im Abendduft,
Über dem flutenden Tief
Ragt die Feste.—
Die immer leiser rief,
Die See, schläft ein.
Der Abend allein
Ist das Beste . . .

The first line portrays the atmosphere Heinrich had found in the prison. It was one which reflected his inner state of mind. For intense emotion, whatever its nature, is hot, oppressive, threatening and confusing to the clarity upon which tranquillity depends. In the portrayal of Kriemhild's terrible hatred in "Die Nibelungen" (*Balladen und Lieder*) the same characteristics are shown, but much more intensely. Her hatred is not only hot, it is like fire, all-consuming, all-destroying. Elisabeth in "Der Gaukler" (*Spiele*) attributes similar traits to passionate love which she fears and avoids. She calls it "den wilden Brand der roten Lust" and compares it to a hot wind which scorches the land over which it blows.

In contrast to an atmosphere which reflects the intensity of feeling which *heiss* and *schwül* connote is the implication of *kühl* and *abendstill*. When he is home and free, Heinrich's tranquillity of mind returns and the atmosphere, in which he is, is characterized by the attributes upon which his mental state depends. But even though he is free and content, he cannot forget the prison, for it towers above the peaceful scene and is *purpur*. This word, like *heiss* and *schwül*, is also used to portray that which is incompatible with tranquillity.

Like the word *dunkel*, it seems to imply intensity rather than any specific color. Frau Miegel feels that an emotion is only destructive when it is very intense, for then it has the power to becloud the clarity suggested by *hell* and thus destroy the element implied by *still*. The beclouding is similar to a kind of intoxication in a human being and the intoxication is opposed to that which *hell* and *still* connote.

In the dramatic sketch "Ein Zwiegespräch" (*Spiele*) Frau Miegel illustrated the idea of intensification and the effects thereof. The scene presents a man endeavoring to seduce a young woman. The hero expresses surprise that his emotion has never touched or disturbed the girl's tranquillity which expresses itself in the clear blue of her eyes. He says to her:

> Wie ist es hold und rätselhaft zu denken, . . .
> Dass deiner grossen Augen glänzend Blau
> Nie unter meinen Blicken sich verdunkelt. . . .

The word *blau* is usually associated with the "ideal" and it is in harmony with the "ideal" as it appears in natural settings. A mother, whose very being is tranquillity, has blue eyes. This girl in "Ein Zwiegespräch" has not been moved by violent emotion, but should she be, then the clear blue of her eyes would become in some way intensified, it would become *verdunkelt* to match that quality in the emotion which influences her. Such an intensity is always implied by *dunkel* and *purpur* with their various compounds.

The power of an intense emotion to intoxicate is expressed metaphorically also. It is compared with the effect which the heavy fragrance of flowers has upon at atmosphere. In natural scenes this condition is expressed by the word *schwer*, or sometimes implied by *schwül*. In case of the effect of passion on a person the words *berauscht, betört, vertraut* and the like are used. In order to describe an intense emotion fully, some word must be present to designate the intensity (*dunkel, schwül, schwer*) and the heat (*heiss, schwül*). These words in conjunction with *hell, still, kühl* are the chief keys to an understanding of the ethical concepts. The relationship between the ethical and the social concepts rests in the fact that *Mutter* implies a personality endowed with the attributes sug-

gested by *still* and *hell*. These qualities are of fundamental importance because, in accordance with Frau Miegel's conception, a mother is able to inspire in others the elements upon which happiness rests. Happiness is but another expression for inner tranquillity which is composed of inner clarity and coolness, or the absence of intensity and heat. It owes its existence to those qualities which compose it.

SYMBOLIC CONCEPTS

The symbols to be discussed in this chapter are in a sense key-words, but they would be lacking in special connotation were it not for the fact that the things for which they stand are defined by the social and ethical key-words. Taken by themselves, the symbolic concepts would have little meaning, but in their relationship to the *Weltanschauung*, they gain specific and definite meaning. The symbols fall quite logically into a group connected with the social attitude and another connected with the ethical beliefs. The symbols will be discussed on a basis of this division, though certain of the concepts are related to both the social and the ethical. The last symbol to be discussed stands apart, but it is important because it illustrates a rather characteristic manner of thought which has not yet been mentioned.

The symbols pertaining to the social attitude are *Mutter, Kind, Kuh* and *Bernstein*. The importance and meaning of the first two are already obvious from what was said of them in Chapter II. Because they were so fully presented in connection with Frau Miegel's social beliefs, their particular importance will not be explained again.

Th third symbol illustrative of the social attitude is explained by the poetess herself in the book *Audhumla*. She says of it: "Der Name Kuh verheisst Glück und Wohlstand." By this she means that the wealth of the East Prussian is best measured by the cattle he owns, for the cow gives humanity milk, food, leather; it fertilizes the fields upon which it pastures; it is dependent for its life upon the fertility of the soil. Beyond this the cow is the symbol of life that is lived close to the soil, close to *Mutter Heimat*. The cow is the symbol for

material plenty and also for spiritual wealth which is granted by *Mutter Heimat* to those who love her and know her.

Bernstein, because it is peculiar to East Prussia, is regarded as sacred to the pagan gods and an embodiment of the quality in East Prussia which distinguishes *Mutter Ostpreussen*. By nature, *Bernstein* is *hell*. According to pagan beliefs it is possessed of magic powers to heal, to protect and to bring the favor of the gods. In Agnes Miegel's eyes, amber is an embodiment of that quality which she designates by *hell* or sometimes *leuchtend*.

It was explained in the preceding chapter that Frau Miegel sees reflected in natural settings the mood described by her ethical key-words. It is not unexpected that she should use the seasons as symbols for the moods which they so closely resemble. Summer and spring mean intense emotion, usually love. The flowers which bloom in these seasons also imply intense love. In common with the Romantics, Frau Miegel looks upon the rose and the lily as representing love, but unlike the Romantics, this love is violent and therefore destructive of the "ideal". Lilacs she uses as the symbol for *Sehnsucht* in any of its phases. Autumn naturally represents that which is *still*, *hell* and *kühl* because that is the nature of autumn. Evening is another symbol for tranquillity, as the word *abendstill* in "Heinrich von Plauen" suggests.

Like the Romantics, Agnes Miegel is partial to the color blue. This word does have some connection with the "ideal", particularly in connection with natural settings, for autumn days that are *hell*, *kühl* and *still* are also characterized by a blue sky. Aside from this relationship the color seems to have no particular connotation and does not serve as a symbol for anything. This is not true of *rot* which the poetess uses to signify youth. Youth is full of life and is most capable of violent passions. By this relationship, *rot* also signifies passion. Because of its connection with the idea of heat, it also is descriptive of intense emotion. The essential meaning of the color, however, is youth and life. Death, by contrast, is considered pale or lacking any color. From the lyrics one draws the conclusion that Frau Miegel regards life as vivid, tumul-

tuous and intense. She frequently describes it as *bunt*. The life which she desires lacks the confusion and intensity and noise which *rot* and *bunt* signify when used in this connection.

The particular manner in which Frau Miegel uses symbols is indicative of her manner of thought. She tends to think tangibly, to reduce her ideas to concrete objects. Her entire attitude toward her home, her native land and her family may be said to be embodied in the one word *Mutter,* while *Kind* is the tangible revelation of "ideal happiness". A rose or lily represents that particular type of love which is destructive of tranquillity, and by their fragrance and color they symbolize the power of a passion to benumb the senses. In a similar manner the word *Hand* is used as a concrete symbol for a person or the personification of an idea. Aside from the symbolic use of the word, it is frequently mentioned in descriptions of persons, as if the poetess attached special importance to the hands as being expressive of the mood of persons. Her father's hands expressed the tranquillity which he found in death. In other instances the word is a symbol for an abstract whole. She writes, for instance, "Noch halte ich die Hand des Lebens" in a lyric from her first volume. In this case life itself is made concrete. This is perhaps the most characteristic use of the word, for it illustrates the purpose which the symbols fill. They are the means by which Frau Miegel grasps the concepts which compose her *Weltanschauung*. By use of them she makes her ideas *greifbar* in the true sense of the German word.

CONCLUSION

In this study an effort has been made to examine the key-words of Agnes Miegel's language. Those key-words have been endowed with a specific and special meaning and used frequently unconsciously and not deliberately. A key-word, which has become so much a part of an author's thought that he uses it instinctively in a sense peculiar to himself, is more valuable as an indication of his true beliefs and attitudes than a key-word which is used deliberately. Conscious use of key-words runs the danger of illustrating that which the author wishes to be his belief rather than that which really is his

attitude. It is hoped that a true picture of Agnes Miegel has been presented in these pages and not an impression which she might have wished to give.

Heretofore studies of Frau Miegel have recognized her awareness of nature, her devotion to East Prussia and Königsberg and the bond between herself and her family. Yet no study has indicated the exact nature of these three attitudes; no study has explained her conception of "happiness" and the forces which destroy it; no critic has pointed out the relationship existing between the ethical and the social attitudes. The basis of this explanation lies, as this study has shown, not in the content of the works nor in the events of the poetess' life, but rather in the understanding of certain ideas which reoccur throughout the verse, stories and essays. The actual abstract attitudes and ideas are not as important to a real understanding of the poetess as are the essential nature and unique characteristics of those attitudes. For it is here that the individuality of any writer lies.

The poetess' interest in and awareness of the natural world has been fully recognized. Yet few poets look upon nature as reflecting their moods and emphasizing those qualities which distinguish the various moods from one another. Agnes Miegel regards nature as endowed, like human beings, with the ability to reveal those atmospheres which are productive or destructive of inner tranquillity and clarity. Natural settings which induce the stuff from which "happiness" springs are *hell, kühl* and *still*. Those atmospheres destructive of the foundations of tranquillity are *heiss, schwül* and *schwer*. The words descriptive of these phases of nature are also used to portray human states of mind as being productive or destructive of inner tranquillity.

All poets recognize a devotion to their native heath, yet only Agnes Miegel looks upon her own country as a mother, parallel in every way with a human mother. The average human being feels and admits a deep attachment to his mother, yet few, if any, would recognize a mother as characterized by those particular qualities which Agnes Miegel's concept *Mutter* implies; few would compare the personality of a mother to

"das grüne Land", which is just another way of saying the fertile land that gives us its fruits, its love and its protection. By this simile Frau Miegel indicates the double meaning of the word *Mutter*. A child's existence and contentment is dependent upon the care its mother gives it; in a larger sense, a person's existence and contentment are dependent upon the care *Mutter Heimat* gives. Wherever the word *Mutter* or other words closely bound to it appear, this full meaning is suggested and colors the whole passage.

Recent studies have shown that Goethe attaches a special meaning to *tüchtig*, Eichendorff to *Freudigkeit*, Stifter to *schön* and Raabe to *still* and *ruhig*. Of these Agnes Miegel endows only the last with unusual implication and that particularly her own. For her, *hell* and *still* express the main theme for her ethical beliefs. They suggest those desirable qualities which induce in mankind a peace of soul. Goethe believed that a being engaged in productive activity most perfectly fulfills the human role. For him *tüchtig* expresses this idea. Agnes Miegel regards the ideal human state as being completely tranquil. A degree of tranquillity is possible in life, but only in death does the human being experience absolute peace. Thus death is, as Schochow says (in *Agnes Miegel. Eine Studie*), the culmination of earthly life. His statement is only completely comprehensible, however, if one realizes that death culminates life because it alone is characterized by the epitome of tranquillity, which is an essential element of the "ideal".

Tranquillity, expressed by the words *friedlich* and *still*, would thus seem to be the focal point of Agnes Miegel's ethical system. It is more than that—it is the central point of her entire social and ethical attitudes. For absolute peace is dependent upon the presence of the concepts implied by *hell* and the like, which in turn can only exist when that which is suggested by *heiss, schwül, schwer* and *dunkel* is absent. The social concept *Mutter* is capable of inspiring in a human being those qualities from which tranquillity results and, at the same time, of dispelling those which banish the "ideal" state. This is possible because the concept *Mutter* is *hell, kühl, still* and

vertraut. Thus the link between the ethical and the social beliefs is established and utter tranquillity becomes the end result of both.

In Agnes Miegel's case inner tranquillity is impossible because her state of mind is disturbed by an unfulfilled desire, as she says in "Künstler". In a later essay she describes this in other words which are more explicit. She says: "Ich gab mein Blut nicht weiter." Frau Miegel felt it her sacred duty to her ancestors to continue the family line. It might also be said that she failed to fulfill her role as a human being because she had no children. The fertility of the soil and of the human race are sacred elements in her eyes. For this idea *grün* is the keyword and *Mutter* and *Kind* serve as symbols. Frau Miegel was by nature capable of motherhood, but never experienced it and thereby denied the sacred power with which nature had endowed her. Because of this she will never know inner clarity and tranquillity in this life.

Raabe's *still* and *ruhig* are used to describe attributes related to his own quiet resignation to life. As Frau Miegel uses the concept, it has little to do with any resignation, for the *still* portrays the quality essential to "happiness". Schochow says that the poetess' works reveal a resigned attitude to the fate that was to be hers, and to the disappointments it brought her. This is perfectly true, but as Frau Miegel says in "Gespräch mit den Ahnen", she has devoted her life to portraying the East Prussia she knew and loved instead of furthering the family line. Her resignation is expressed very clearly here, in that she substitutes literary activity for motherhood but would have preferred the latter. Her conception of happiness has nothing to do with this substitution, for she portrays many women as *still* and *hell*, some who have been mothers and some who have not. The distinction between Raabe's concept with its inter-relations to his *Weltanschauung* and that of Agnes Miegel rests in the fact that her concept *still* has nothing to do with resignation.

If the concept expressed by *friedlich* and *still* be recognized as the center of Agnes Miegel's social and ethical attitudes and its relationship to those attitudes be understood, then a deeper

meaning is to be found in her works. Utterly aside from the thesis of this essay, the works are a vivid and true picture of the society and age in which the poetess has lived. As such they are enlightening and very interesting. Because the works are largely personal, they reveal the personality of their author. But the full extent of that revelation can only be grasped in the light of the importance of the concept *still* and the things which contribute to it and upon which it depends. Only when the implications and importance of this basic key-concept and of other concepts has been recognized, can Agnes Miegel herself and the full meaning of what she has written be comprehended.

VITA

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